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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an assignment designed to improve undergraduate physical education students' observational skills through skill analysis in volleyball. Early in the term, students are videotaped while performing two major volleyball skills. After several weeks of instruction on various volleyball skills, students complete the assignment which involves developing and recording a set of criteria to evaluate their own earlier performance and the performance of other novices. Implementation of the assignment over the duration of the course is described, and 10 helpful organizational hints for successful implementation are given. (IAH)

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AN INDIVIDUALIZED OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT IN PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

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An Individualized Observation Assignment in Professional Preparation

Instructors in professional preparation are constantly trying to develop techniques and to provide assignments that will better prepare students for teaching competency. Over the past decade or so, there has been an increased awareness of the importance of observational skills of professional students in the area of human movement.[1] The purpose of this presentation is to describe an assignment that has been formulated for and tested by undergraduate physical education students. The assignment has been designed to improve students' observational skills through skill analysis in volleyball.

During the first or second class meeting, students are extended the opportunity to select two of four major volleyball skills (wall pass, wall set, overhead serve, and spike) to perform while being videotaped. Students who are relatively new to the sport are encouraged to choose the wall pass and wall set while those with more experience have greater freedom in making their selections. Time is spent early in the unit to acquaint all students with some understanding of how to perform the wall pass. The assumption is made that all students have had some background with the overhead, open hand set technique. Videotaping is done during the third class session.

During the next three or four weeks, students are given instruction on the various volleyball skills. Once all skills

have been presented and practiced, students are provided the instructions and materials to complete the assignment.

There are two critical aspects of this assignment: (1) students must have the opportunity to observe visual illustrations of the skills as they are performed correctly; and (2) students must be provided the opportunity to view visual illustrations of fundamental performance errors made by the novice. To accomplish this, students are informed that several copies of the following materials have been placed on reserve in the Media Resource Center of the campus library: (1) videotaped performances of class members (labeled Tape I); (2) videotape of a section of general studies students who had completed Volleyball I and were filmed in all four of the volleyball skills (labeled Tape II); and (3) a commercially developed instructional videotape, "Fundamentals of Volleyball Techniques." This tape shows each of the four skills performed correctly by skilled performers, with narratives that describe appropriate movement responses for good skill execution. It has been found that students develop observation skills best if they know in advance for what they are looking.[2] The text, class notes, and the commercially produced videotape all serve as resources from which the students develop and record a set of criteria that will be used to evaluate performances. Students, in addition to evaluating themselves in the two skills in which they were taped, are each assigned three other performers to assess. These performers are from the tape of 30 general studies students

mentioned earlier. This allows for not only the development of observational skills, but for greater competency in skill analysis as well.[3]

Along with a written critique of their self-skill performances and suggestions for improvement, students are to subjectively evaluate on a 5 to 1 scale (5 = excellent, 1 = poor) each of the skills they observe. In the case of the general students observed in all four skills, students are asked to total the scores to compile a composite score for each of the three students. This can serve as some evidence of their observation/evaluation ability. These scores will be some indication as to the rank order of each of the three students and their relationship to each other.

Some Helpful Organization Hints

1. Order the students for videotaping according to the skills they have selected to perform (i.e., those performing the wall pass and wall set are taped first, while those who have selected the wall pass and the overhead floater serve will be taped next, while those performing the wall set and serve are ordered to be taped next, etc.).

2. Before the taping session begins, announce the assigned numbers one through however many there are in class so students will know who they follow and that as little time as possible is consumed between students' tapings. At the beginning of each student's performance, flash a card with that student's assigned

number on it for easy student identification during the tape playback.

3. Set the video camera in a location where there will be a minimum of background interference. It is best if all taping can be completed without moving the location of the camera. Using one corner of the gymnasium serves this purpose well if there can be a net that runs parallel to the wall used for wall skills. From this camera location, students can be filmed in the space described by the arrows on both the wall pass and the wall set. By turning and facing the net, students can perform their serves over the net, and for the spiking, the zoom lens on the camera can bring the performer into closer view at the net position. The camera needs only to be turned on its tripod to capture all skill performances.

4. Before the taping session begins, go over all procedures thoroughly, including performance area dimensions. Assign one or two students with good setting skills to be of assistance when those who have selected spiking are to be taped.

5. Provide enough opportunity for performance trials to get an accurate representation of their skill ability. (Ten to 20 seconds are usually ample.) Indicate the number of serves and spikes each student is to take while being taped. (Three should probably serve as a minimum whereas five might serve as a maximum, dependent upon the amount of time you have.)

6. Obtain a signed consent from each of the general studies students prior to their taping session.

7. When developing the videotape of general studies volleyball students, use a numbering and flash card system described in #2 above for easy identification of students during tape playback.

8. Develop a master list of performance characteristics of the 30 students in the general studies group with a 5-1 point rating on each of the four skills, to compile a composite score for each.

9. Use composite scores to develop a ranking of low to high, the members of the general studies students with regard to their overall skill performance.

10. In making the individual assignments of the three general studies students, assign both men and women, as well as those with a variety in skill abilities, to each student.

This assignment has been well accepted by the professional students. For one, students usually enjoy seeing themselves on color television and, secondly, they do readily report how seeing themselves helps them correct some of their errors even after having acquired some instruction. Overall, their responses to this assignment are very positive. Although there is a great deal of time demanded of the instructor in videotaping, viewing, and recording, it is well worth the effort when it does seem to allow the professional preparation students to develop excellent observational skills.

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*An earlier version of this presentation appeared in the Illinois Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Volume XX.5, Spring, 1986, p. 9.